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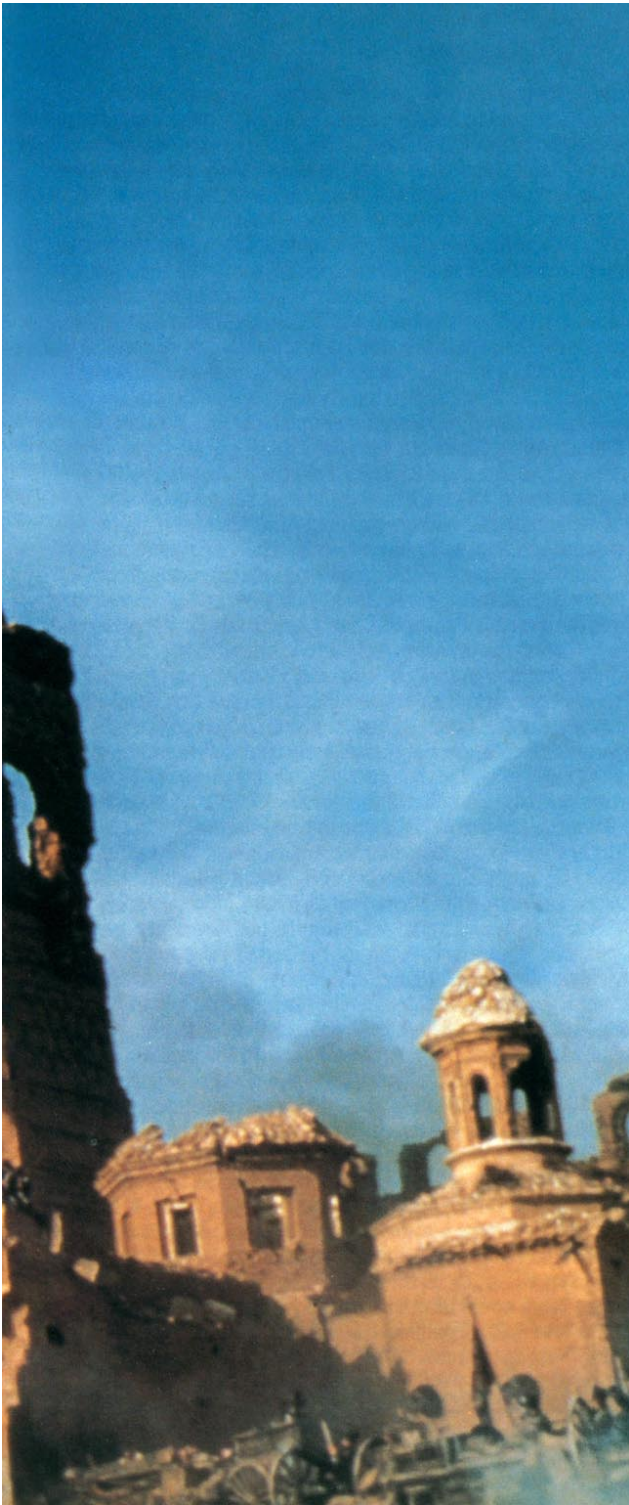
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The Adventures of Terry Gilliam 4

While thematic similarities resonate through the collected works of all visionary artists, even the most self-aware amongst them might be hesitant to proclaim as a trilogy three decisively unique film projects unrelated in time and place and without a single character in common. Not so Terry Gilliam. For him, *Time Bandits*, *Brazil* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* represent a three-part celebration of the persistent dreamer seeking refuge in flights of fancy from the humdrum realities of the workaday world. With massive doses of imagination — and an irreverent sense of humor springing from his Monty Python roots — Gilliam has spent the last decade leaping through time and space and into alternate universes both wondrous and bizarre. Acutely aware that special effects are the essential elements needed to unlock his wildest imaginings, Gilliam has surrounded himself with top practitioners in the field — some spanning all three pictures — who have consistently pushed the limits of budget-conscious, low-tech film trickery to produce for him an abundance of cinematic wonders both grand and small. Article by Paul M. Sammon and Don Shay.

FRONT COVER — Cloud dancing in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*.
A winged descent for dreamer Sam Lowry in *Brazil* — BACK COVER.





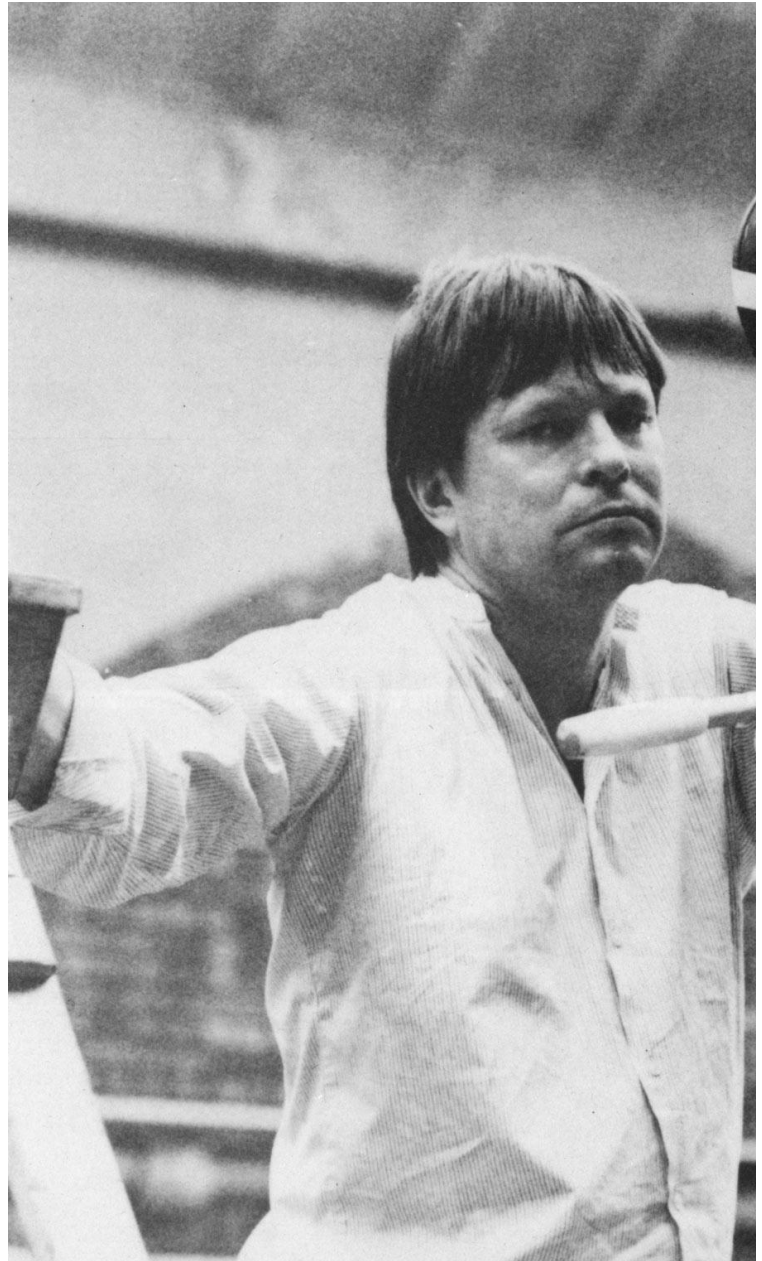
THE ADVENTURES OF **TERRY** GILLIAM

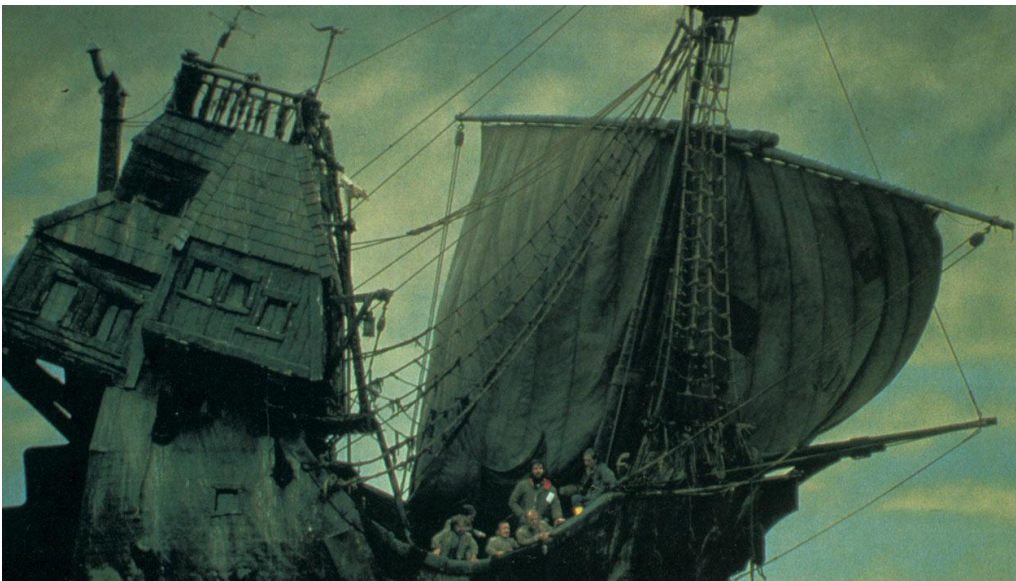
article by
Paul M. Sa
& Don Sha

group and direct a non-Python film titled *Time Bandits*. Even at this point, a recognizable and consistent artistic vision had begun to appear in his work. Gilliam's films were an odd mixture of stinging satire and low-brow humor laced with references to art and literature and a passion for recreating bygone cultures in a believable and realistic manner. "It's true that I have a deep love of history, literature and art. If I wanted to be shallow, I suppose I could just say that these are the results of a classic liberal arts education which involved philosophy, literature, politics — the works. I would also like to think I have a social conscience, for whatever that's worth. But there is another level to my interests. I love to futz around with cartooning. I was always absorbed by the idea of ancient civilizations, as well as the art of such people as Goya and Brueghel, Dore and Piranesi. I like movies, too — films by Disney and directors like Keaton and Kubrick and Fellini and Kurosawa — you know, the same ones Woody Allen likes. Further, I love to read. Dostoevsky is a favorite of mine — also Kurt Vonnegut and others. My favorite book is *Catch-22*. And this is why I made the boy in *Time Bandits* a reader. It was my little pitch to the children in the audience. 'Hey kids! See how this boy's parents only watch television? They get themselves blown up in the end! Save yourselves! Read!'"

The central theme of *Time Bandits*, however — one which unites the film with both *Brazil* and *Baron Munchausen* — was a concept very close to the heart of its creator. "The one theme that runs through all three of these pictures is a consistently serious battle between fantasy and what people perceive as reality. What I dislike about so-called realists is that they seem to have a very limited view of the possibilities of the world. This rigid, authoritarian world-view we are putting up with right now limits the possibilities of other existent, just-as-credible parts of life. One of these 'parts' is the human imagination — which is, of course, what *Munchausen*, *Brazil* and *Time Bandits* are really all about."

Imagination infuses *Time Bandits*. Costing just over \$5 million to produce, *Time Bandits* was filmed during a twelve-week period in 1980 and released the following year. The film opens with a 'cosmic zoom-in' — a series of dissolves starting with a universal overview of stars and nebulae and ending at the home of Kevin (Craig Warnock), the young protagonist and lead character. "Obviously I was attempting to set up the vastness of the universe and then say, 'But here's this one small story,'" Gilliam explained. "But in terms of my trilogy, what's interesting about that sequence is that it introduces — in a rather spectacular way — my career-long association with Kent Houston of Peerless Camera Company Ltd. Peerless and Kent have handled the optical effects on all three of my past films."

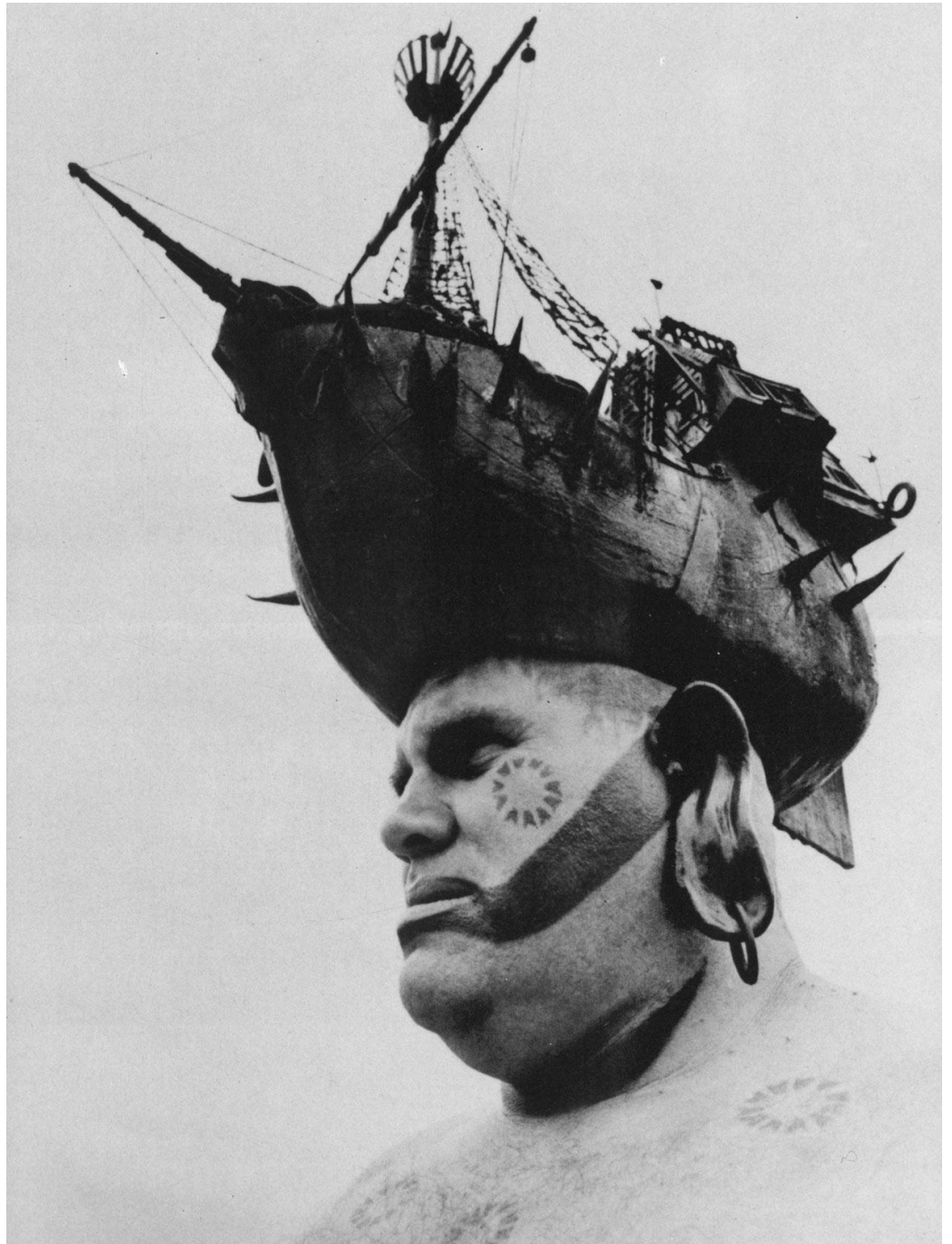




had actually begun working with Gilliam's earliest television days. "Before that," been with an English animator named I a minor splash in American television a short film called 'The Do-It-Yourself rostrum cameraman for Bob, shooting tion. That's how I met Terry."

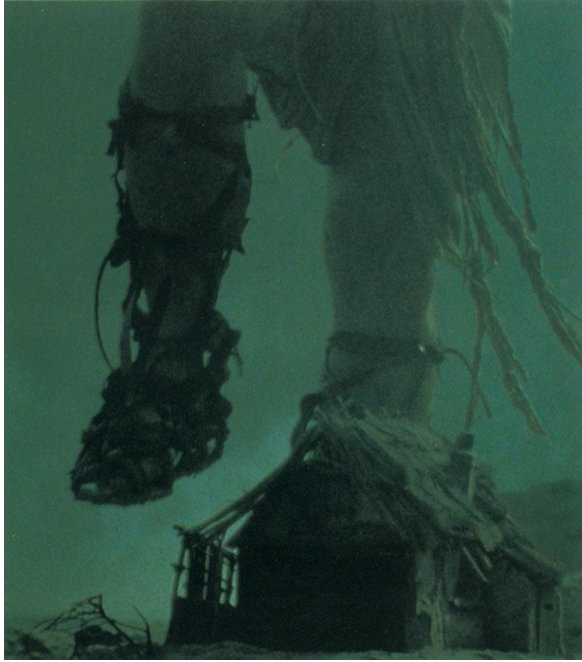
Houston and Peerless were personally to handle the *Time Bandits* optical w Houston, "the plan was to do as much stage as possible. But a lot of it just d became the salvage unit, doing a lot of work began with the very first sequenc mic zoom was done with a combinatio computer controlled photography, NAS/ aerial photograph. For the start of that s some artwork of arcane symbols. We s of acetate overlays on one of the first puters in London. A company named N the rig to us, which had been made Roberts. It was a real caveman number core rather than discs or tape. Very pri a computerized camera tied into an En berry stand. And we shot a lot of our 1 material on that beast. In England, we t in the United States — to use an under tem on our animation stands. Essentia stand which is used like a printer. A directs an image off a mirror underneat a pair of large condensers set into th densers form an aerial image generated onto the film — in-camera. If you put a or titling on the tabletop — we did th ourselves — that artwork will be imag well. You can do quite good matting wit works well for combining animation witl we try to do as much in-camera compo cially on anything that goes anywhere n. We did have one other piece of equipr effects workhorse on *Time Bandits*. Thi optical printer that we owned at the tim aerial image printer that was made in company called Eastern Effects in New drive and optics a bit, but basically this tion stand were the only bits of equipme on *Time Bandits*."

Included in the *Time Bandits* optical and Paul Whitbread on the animation st nis De Groot — and Nick Dunlop on th



CINEFEX 3

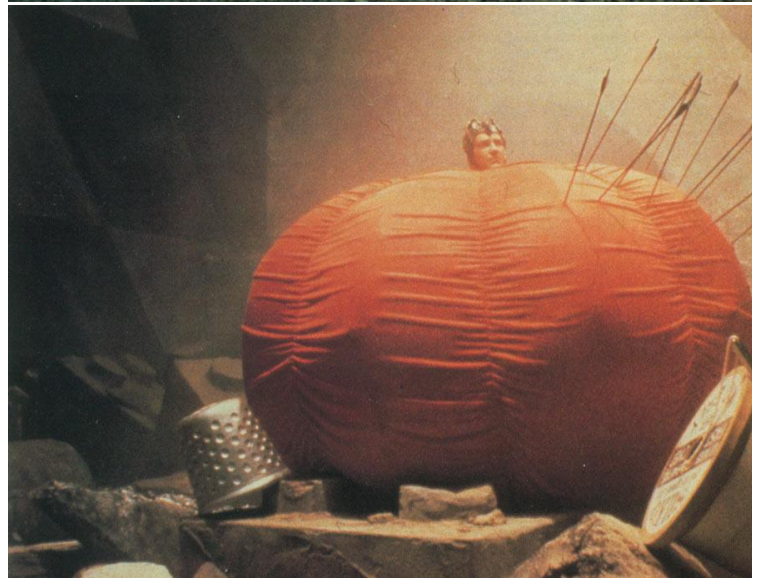


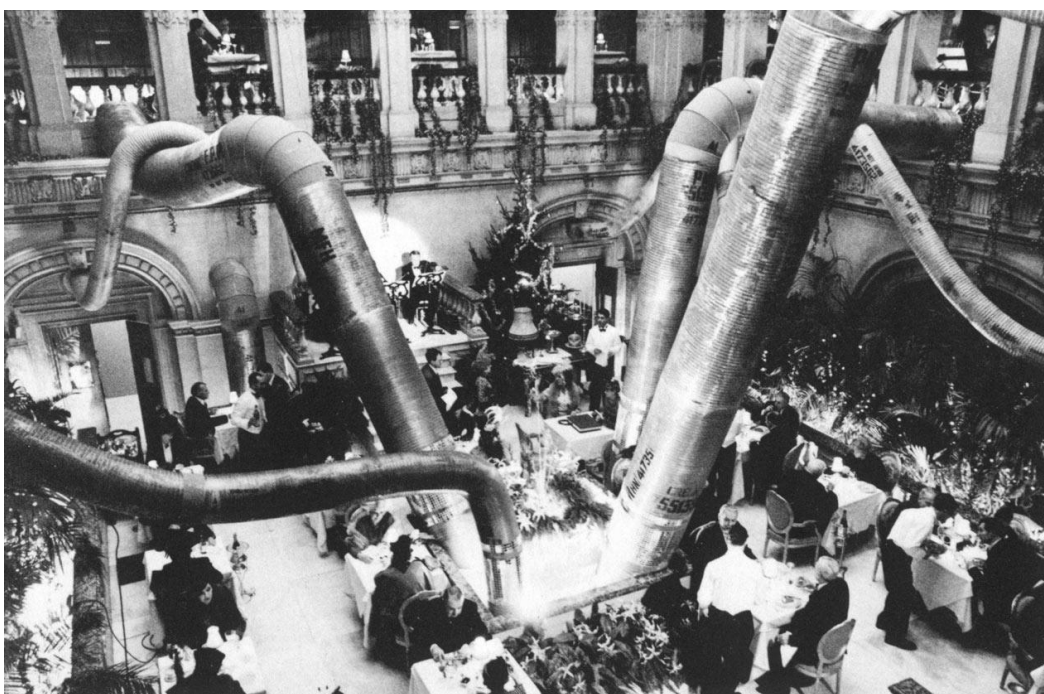


A second Westbridge miniature — smaller than the first and made from polystyrene and plaster — was used for a follow-on shot of the Bandits crossing a drawbridge to the gatehouse. From a high vantage point, the minute adventurers can be seen striding across the span. Figures representing Kevin and the Bandits — approximately one inch tall — were first equipped with tiny iron plugs. Ken Hill then manipulated these figures across the bridge by drawing thin magnetic rods underneath the structure itself. As with the larger model, smoke was added when shooting to create a sense of depth. With Julian Doyle as his lighting cameraman, Gilliam personally directed most of the miniature photography.

Once inside, the Bandits find the fortress to be a crumbling, yet impressive structure — again augmented by a Ray Caple painting featuring high vaulting arches. "The look of the fortress is based largely on the engravings of a 17th century Italian artist named Piranesi," Gilliam commented, "who did incredible works of all the great Roman monuments and ruins. To this day, Piranesi remains a great inspiration to me." Inside the fortress, the Bandits make their way across a giant maze that stretches off into the darkness and are soon captured by the forces of evil and imprisoned in a hanging cage. "The maze scenes were done relatively easily. First we photographed a small six-foot-square model of the maze. Then we did a live-action element on the largest soundstage at Shepperton Studios. For this shot we knew we would need a much larger enclosed space than any of the stages Lee International could provide. At Shepperton we hung pieces of black velvet on the far wall of the stage and put our camera up on a high scaffolding at the other end. By laying down pieces of painted cloth on the stage floor — cloth that represented the rocky surface of the maze — we created an illusion of watching these guys run across the top of this thing from a great distance. It helped considerably that our actors were half normal size — we did not have to get as far away from them as we would have if they had been six feet tall. Incidentally, I achieved that composite purely by eye. I just slipped an exposed frame of the maze model into the camera viewfinder and then angled in the live element from that. Kent Houston and his people did the final composite."

Returning to Lee International, Gilliam directed the sequence wherein the Bandits escape from the hanging cage. An initial wide shot featured three hanging cages. One — containing the actors — was full-sized. To achieve a forced perspective, a three-quarter-scale and half-scale cage were also hung side-by-side with the full-scale prop. Strutter (Malcolm Dixon) is lowered on a rope and swung away by his companions, cage by cage, until he finally reaches the top of the maze. Gilliam again incorporated a combination of live-action and miniature elements. Medium and closeup shots were reserved for the live actor,













It is evening and a radio is on and that haunting song is coming over the airwaves — escapist, romantic sounds suggesting that somewhere out there, far from the conveyor belts and ugly steel towers, is a green and wonderful world. Of course, the story that developed has little to do with that image, except that everything sprang from it." Like Kevin in *Time Bandits*, Sam Lowry is a protagonist more at home with his fantasies than he is with real life. "On the surface, *Brazil* is about an unambitious clerk who works in a large ministry and who becomes victim to the machine of which he is a part. Actually, though, it is about someone who does not take reality seriously enough and spends too much time dreaming."

Sam Lowry's divergent worlds — both the wearying one of his real life and the exhilarating alternative in his dreams — would afford Gilliam and associates more than an ample supply of challenges as the project geared up for a November 1983 start date. Set in an indeterminate time and place, *Brazil* would require an 'other-side-of-now' look at the world — recognizably contemporary but decidedly askew, as though seen through the eyes of a hopelessly inept visionary from the 1920s. As such, the film demanded an environment as manufactured and dense as *Blade Runner's*, yet very much different in style and tone. With a modest \$15 million budget and only twelve short weeks of preproduction, innovative problem solving and economy of execution became essential ingredients for bringing the project successfully to completion.

In a world brought to its knees by rampant bureaucracy, stifling pollution and unbridled terrorism, Sam Lowry seeks refuge in escapist fantasies. Garbed in gleaming armor with Daedalian wings, he soars birdlike among the clouds, forever in search of his dream girl, an angelic figure who seems always just out of reach. Since most of the dreamworld mini-sequences would require imagery impossible to photograph straightforwardly, Gilliam turned to veteran special effects supervisor George Gibbs and model effects supervisor Richard Conway, both of whom he had worked with earlier on *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*.

Crucial among the images desired were those of the winged dream-dweller floating majestically through the skies. For ground-level shots and closeups, a full flying suit with collapsible wings was conceived by costume designer James Acheson and built by Ray Scott. A rigid body harness was incorporated into the costume, allowing actor Jonathan Pryce to be suspended from wires for the necessary landing scenes or mounted on a long rod for aerial closeups. In either instance, the mounting rig afforded Pryce a full range of arm/wing movements which, when coordinated with appropriate wire or rod actuations, produced a suitably convincing semblance of self-directed flight. Gilliam anticipated using a similar approach for the long shots as well. Richard Conway, however, believed the

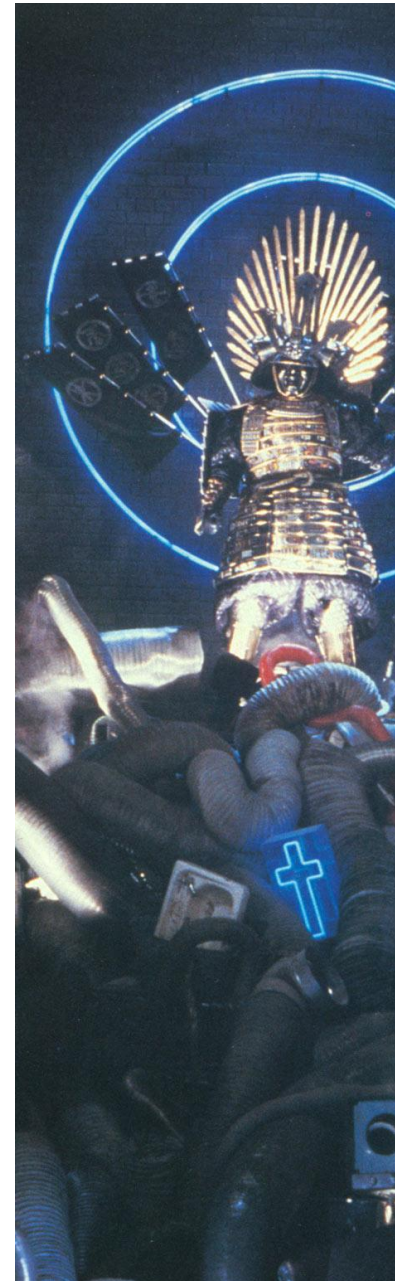
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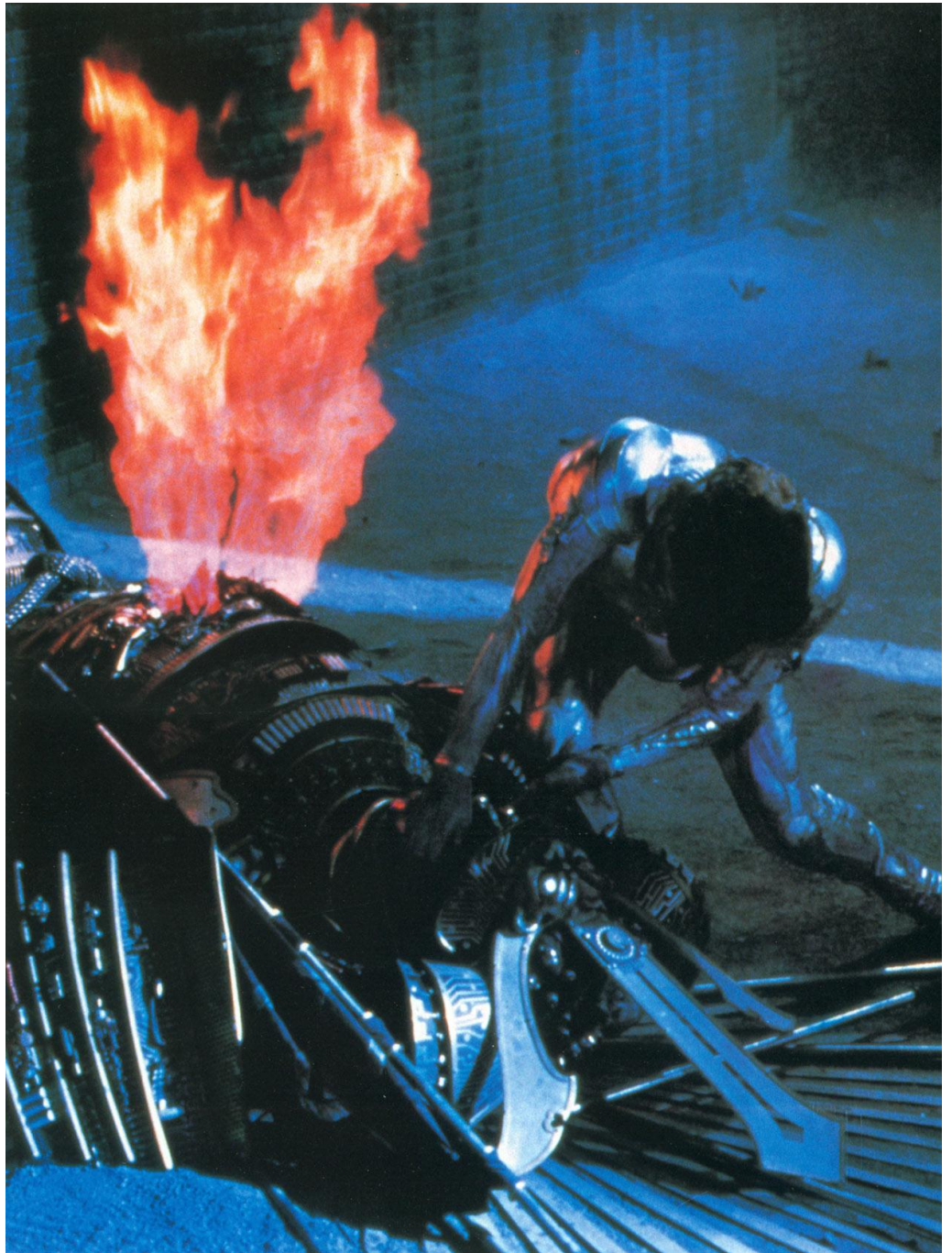
Just as the winged Lowry is about to rescue his dream girl from a hanging cage, a metallic samurai warrior appears from nowhere atop a gigantic mound of technological trash. / Lowry and the samurai square off to do battle. / To make the robot warrior seem much larger than its opponent — without resorting to opticals — long shots of the two together were photographed with a child actor standing in for Jonathan Pryce in a scaled down replica of the flying suit. Gilliam coaches the young actor on set. / The lifeblood of the juggernaut is fire; and when Lowry penetrates its body armor with his sword, great bursts of flame spew forth. The effect was done live on stage

in full-size wings; but in the end, we used Jonathan only in some really tight shots against a painted background with bits of smoke blowing through to look like clouds. The rest was all shot by the model unit and it was great stuff. Richard really had great faith in the flying model approach, and because I was so deeply involved in everything else that was going on at the time I just let him go — and I was delighted with the results.”

Remarkably enough, all of the full-figure flying shots employed a scale replica only eight inches long. “Most people who use little dummies tend to make them too stiff,” Conway asserted. “Ours was not only beautifully modeled, but it moved in all the proper places as well. Valerie Charlton constructed the basic figure, which was made of lead — in fact, lots of pieces of lead all tied together. She also made the costume. Martin Gant built the wing mechanism. To make it all work, everything had to be made from the right material with the right flexibility and the right weight — which is why we used lead for the body. As is customary with models, we were shooting at five times normal speed, so any movement we did with the puppet had to be done rapidly. Without that extra weight, a limb would not react properly. If, for example, the calf had to be picked up and there was no weight in it, the knee hinge would not bend as it should or return to place when released. So you have to give gravity a chance by making everything very heavy. Fortunately, since the puppet was so small, we did not have a problem trying to support it. Even the tiniest of wires can carry up to about twenty pounds. Another thing that really helped was using four control wires instead of the usual two. Everything moved — his arms, his thighs, his ankles, all by radio control — and I think it was those subtle movements that really made him come to life.” Even with four control wires, concealing the rigging was not a major concern. “If you move rapidly across the screen, and if you are careful to paint the wires a light color, and if you match the background and have the lighting right, you can lose the wires quite nicely.” Though true in theory, the model unit would eventually find that a large percentage of their flying shots had to be scrapped because of wires — often visible for only a few critical frames.

Once the model was completed, a proper setting had to be devised. As with the flying man himself, the original thought was to use live-action material composited via bluescreen. “The problem with plates,” cautioned Conway, “is that if you shoot them from either an airplane or a helicopter, they are always moving about. They have a life of their own. So in order to make the scenes work, the foreground subject has to have the same movement — which is very difficult to do. People have failed with that sort of thing miserably many times before. After much consideration, we decided to build our clouds from cotton wool. We got on the stage and experimented briefly with a small amount, saw possibilities in the approach and then went ahead





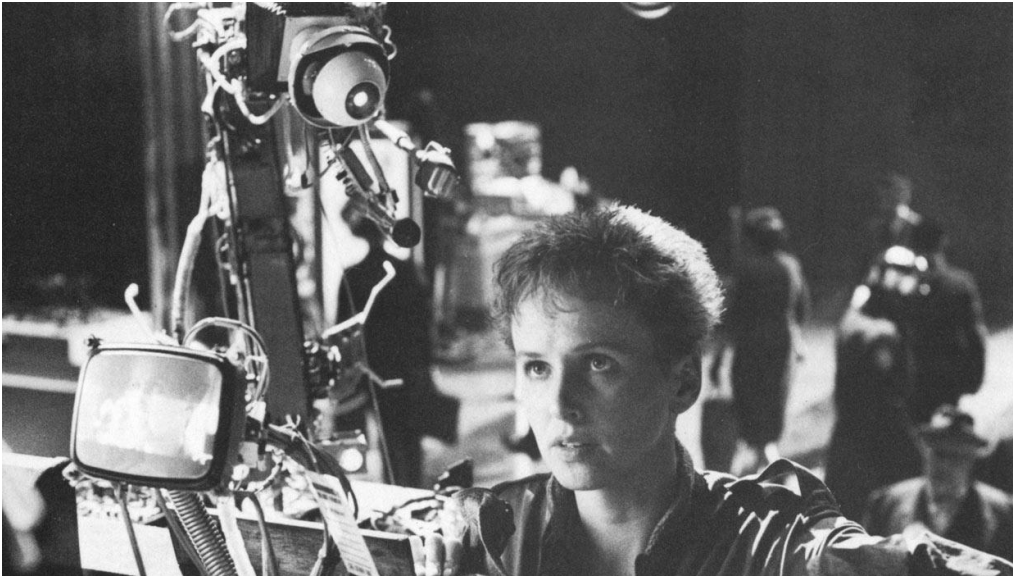


his crew began assembling a massive "We started out with great steel frames like trees. These we covered with steel mesh we put some lighter steel mesh and built the cloud shapes. Some of them 1 feet high. In order to do the work, we had of clouds very carefully — what clouds shaped and why. Once we got the hang were actually creating something that was quite enjoyable. But every part of it had cifically and with the greatest of precision to let any of it not work, because if or which happened several times before we totally ruin the effect of all the other clouds about eighty feet long and forty feet deep of piano wires stretched tight from side clouds suspended on them. It was a amongst them."

After studying some preliminary test I mined that the elaborate cloud setting to be fully convincing. "I was prepare cotton clouds," Gilliam admitted, "but had to have something moving — other off a realistic feeling. So a combination was used. Dry ice makes great cloud shape to the ground. Steam, on the other hand, two together and combining it with the able to get the full effect of moving clouds."

"We built the biggest dry ice steam tanks," Conway elaborated. "They were giant rocks. Each held about a thousand gallons of water. A generator supplied each tank. What we wanted was the effect that cooling towers have those great enormous steam clouds that — and we managed to achieve that on. With those six tanks billowing out steam clouds in the background, it worked amazingly well. The steam had a great after-effect we would get these twinkly little bits of fake clouds — the sort of thing one sees looks carefully."

Cognizant of the fact that the flying considerable trial and error, both in choreography — not to mention time-consuming,

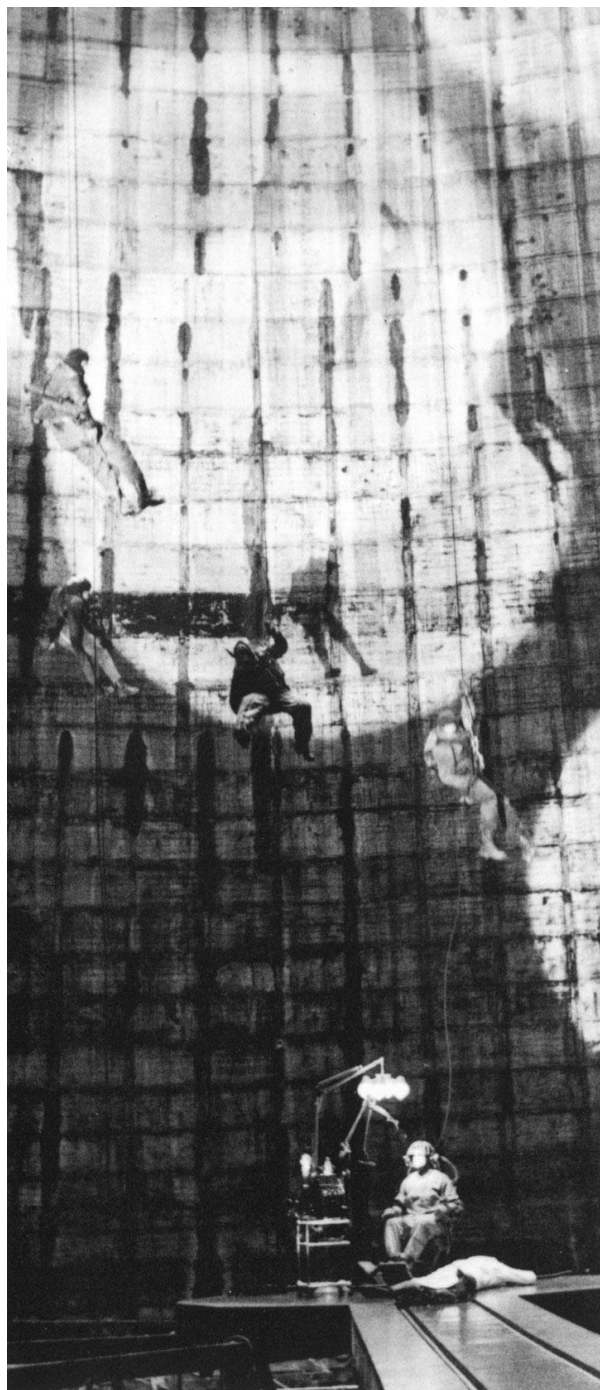


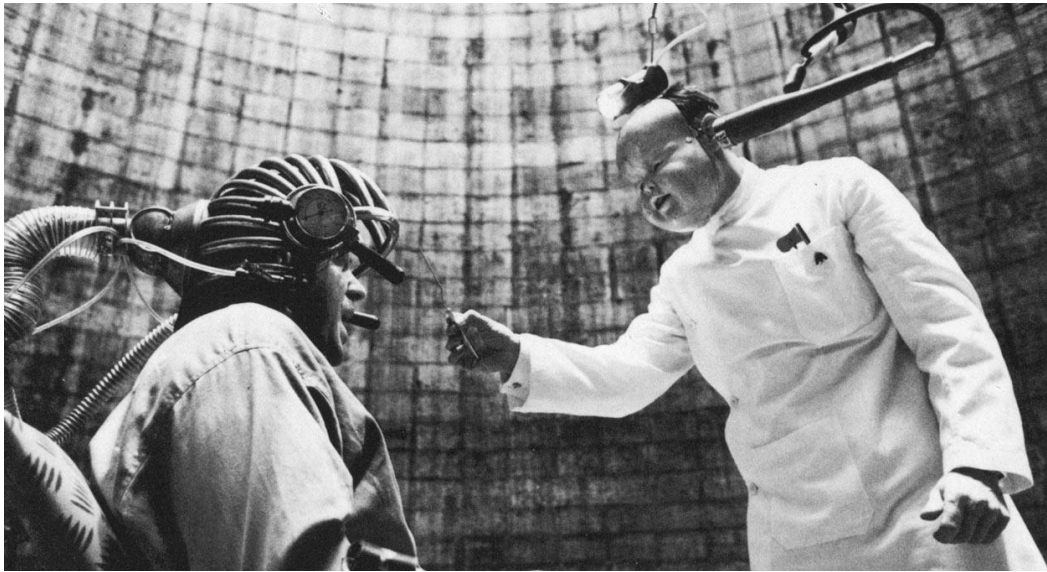
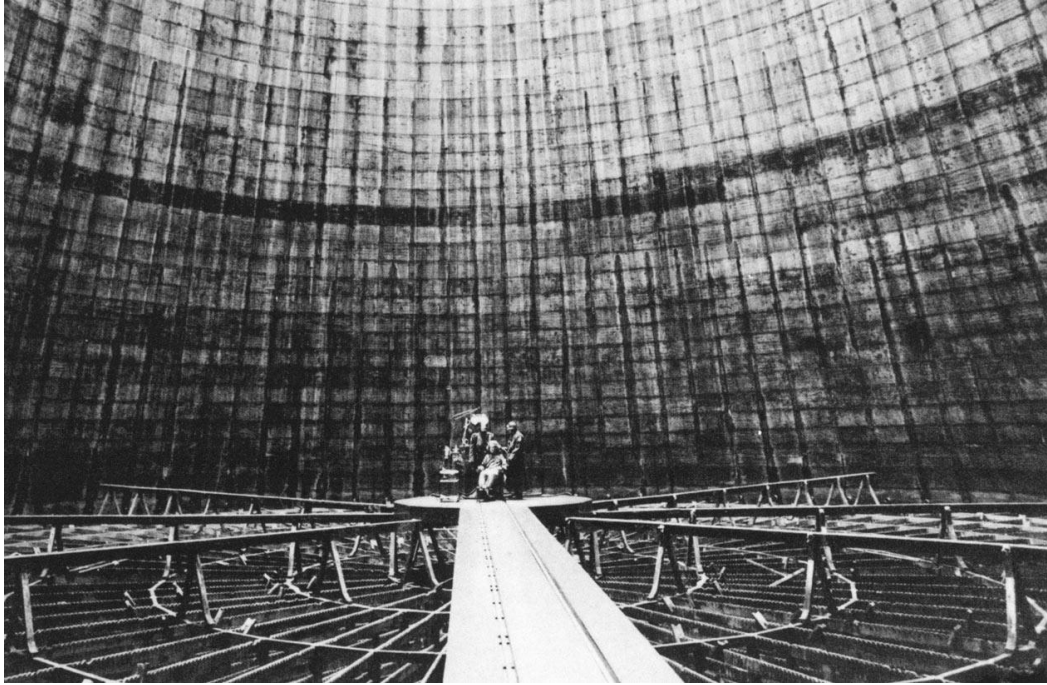
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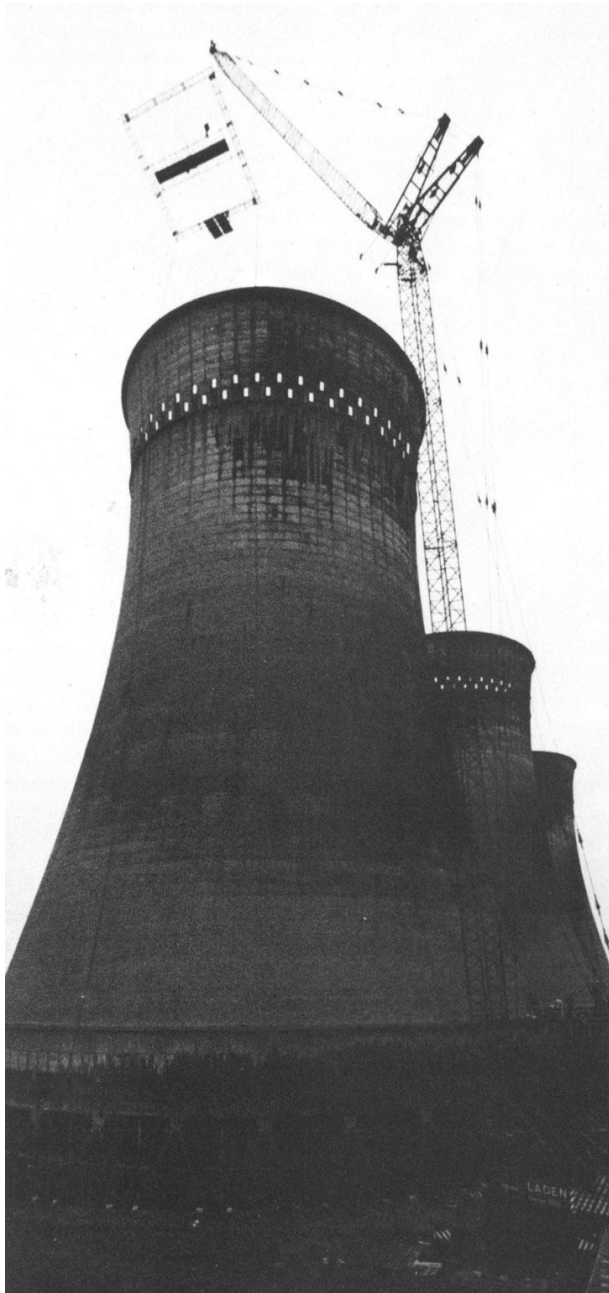
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needs. For example, the computer in Kurtzmann's office was actually modified from some old teletype machines that George Gibbs found. We thought those made a good start and we pulled off their covers and casings to see what we could do to modify them. Then we took the smallest television we could find and pulled it out of its casing. It turned out to be too small to read well, so we put a magnifier on it. Everything was just built up like that — organically, like a sculpture — until we got the desired effect. In general, I try to break down the interdepartmental barriers which tend to arise on a production, so everybody was messing around in everybody else's territory — which I think is a good thing."

The scrambling of departmental duties was not only encouraged by the director, it was necessitated by the hectic pace of production. "The gadgets and toys we placed in Sam's flat would, under normal circumstances, have been made by the art or prop departments," Gibbs remarked, "but there had not been enough time to prepare anything. Norman Garwood, the production designer, was so busy with the sets that he really gave me carte blanche to go ahead. I sat down with Robert Hollow and Dave McCall and sketched out everything — and luckily, everyone was happy with the things we came up with."

While the apartment settings clearly indicated a mechanical world gone benignly amuck, the Ministry of Information where Lowry is employed is nothing less than a technological horror. Filmed at a huge disused flour mill on the London docksides, the expansive office set was filled with clacking and creaking equipment of every type and dimension. "One of the machines we were the most proud of was the ID-checking machine that you see when Sam first enters the ministry building," Gibbs related. "Terry Gilliam said he wanted a remote camera thing and he wanted it so he could see all the works — so we built one. It is sort of a television camera on a trolley that sniffs and prods at its victims and was made entirely of junk that we just built up. I had purchased a lot of interesting little bits and pieces from a place that sold reconditioned medical and dental equipment to Third World countries, and some of those parts made their way into the machine. We also used parts from telescopic arms and angle-poised lamps — and we went to another place where we bought big boxes of old-fashioned valves that used to be used in radios. So the machine had a lot of character. It was radio-controlled, and to move it around we built a track — but the thing definitely had a mind of its own. At one point it developed a short circuit and nearly drove itself off the top of some stairs — which would have been disastrous since we had built only one of them and it played a fairly important role in the film." Within the massive office complex, a secretary sits wired to another parafuturistic device — a one-handed automatic typing machine. "That was another of the old telex machines I had found — again with its cover removed so

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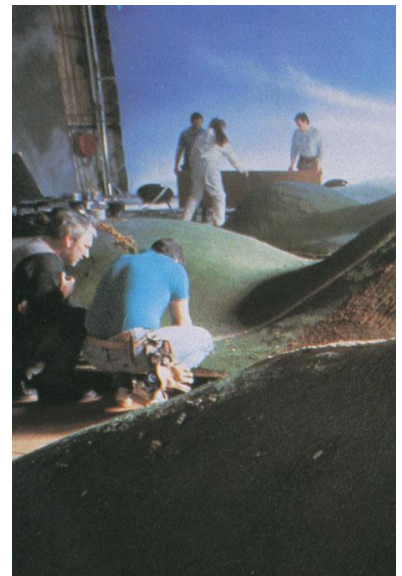
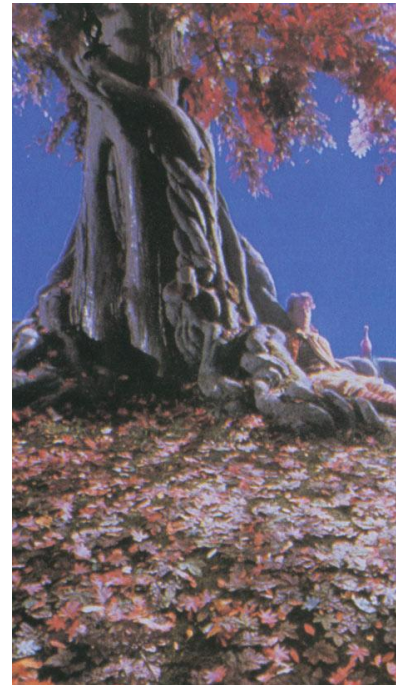


On the return leg of his round-trip dash to Vienna, Berthold (Eric Idle) pauses for a rest. The stylized setting — designed to suggest a Maxfield Parrish painting — was erected on the Cinecitta bluescreen stage. / Background material for the composite was accomplished months later at Pinewood Studios in England. A miniature set was rigged from beneath with traveling air jets that kicked up tiny clouds of dust to represent a high-speed runner in the distance. / Mounted on Bucephalus, the Baron leaps from a window high atop the sultan's palace. The effect was first attempted with a dummy horse and rider being lowered on wires in front of a large painted backing adjacent to the Cinecitta water tank. / When the full-size material proved unconvincing, the scene was reaccomplished at Pinewood with quarter-scale models. / A miniature representation

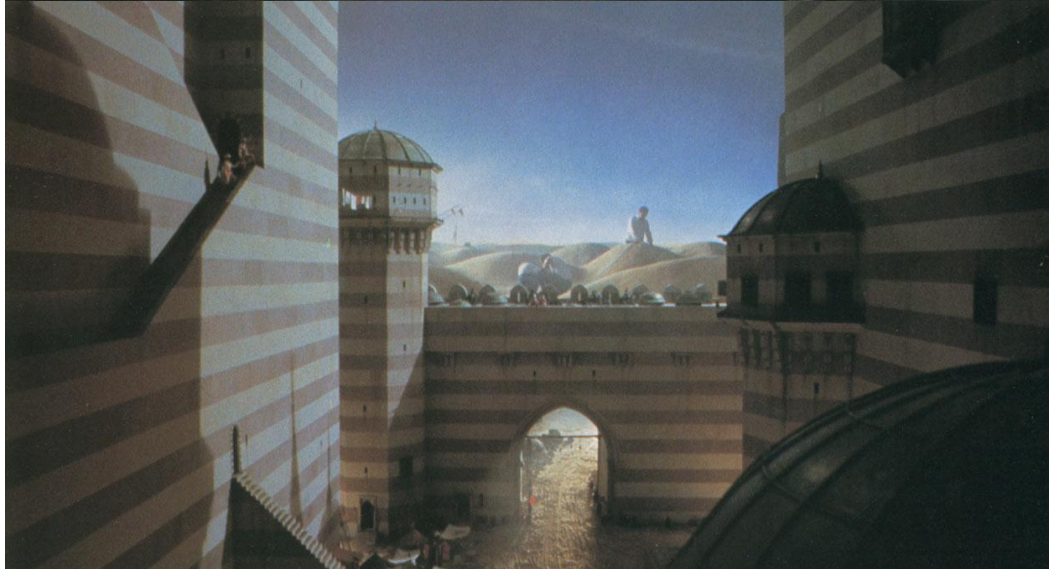
decide whether the suits needed to be specially made and *where* we were going to have them made. Luckily I found a company that specializes in making plastic suits for people who work with chemicals. We gave them our specifications and they made up two clear plastic suits for us. The suits had to have waterproof zippers like the ones used on diving suits and the zippers had to be placed on the shoulders so we could fit the actors inside. After we got the guys into the suits, we started to pour in the effluent — which was a mixture of paint and peat and we actually produced little stools. It looked pretty revolting.”

Gilliam had hoped to shoot the sequence in a single take, but the physical realities of the effect made that impossible. “The problem was that each suit — once it was filled up with fifty gallons of this stuff — weighed about five hundred pounds. Bob Hoskins might have been able to handle it because he’s a pretty sturdy guy, but the other actor was much more frail. Also we were worried that the suits might burst open under all that pressure — or that just the weight of the mixture would crush the actors’ feet even though we put big protective boots on them. We were also concerned that they might fall over once the suits were full and that the weight might crush their backs or that they might drown inside before we could get them out. There were just too many risks involved in doing it all in one take. So we ended up shooting the sequence in two stages. I had dustbins made up that were two-and-a-half feet in diameter by two-and-a-half feet deep. In the first stage, we shot the bottom half of the suits filling up. Then we stopped, put the actors in these dustbins which were filled with water and shot the rest of the suit filling up. The water in the dustbins canceled out the bottom weight. For the shots of the muck completely covering up their faces, we used stuntmen. Even the stuntmen were a little worried because their lives were in our hands and it was up to us to get them out of those suits in time. We would fill the suits to the top, count to ten and then open them up — and they had to hold their breath while all this was going on. At one point, the zipper on one of the suits broke, so we had to cut that guy out when the time came.” Fresh air was pumped into the suits at all times — not only to provide oxygen to the actors inside the airtight costumes, but also to keep the clear plastic from fogging up.

No actor involved in *Brazil* came away from the production without some encounter with the special effects departments. Katherine Helmond — playing Lowry’s narcissistic mother — underwent preparations for a plastic surgery procedure in which her character’s facial skin was to be stretched outrageously far back, clamped and then wrapped in a cellophane-type material. “Aaron Sherman — who is a prosthetic makeup expert — did the makeup for the scene,” Gilliam noted. “The skin was already on Katherine’s face — pulled way out to the back. Jim Broad-









really stretching apart. But in the end, it was more effective."

For all of its discomforts, Ida Lowry's death was ultimately successful. By the end of the film, she was more than twenty-five. Unfortunately, Ida (Barbara Hicks) takes a different road to death than the acid method — which produces one discomfort after another until it finally kills her. Her funeral is a macabre circus when Sam Lowry — fleeing the militia — collides with her coffin and her head hits the floor. "Since she dies as a result of something so terribly wrong with her acid surgery," Gilliam decided to have the remains of Mrs. Terrai bandaged still around her head — as if she was still alive by the acid. We made four fiberglass models of her into them, with a mixture of spaghetti and meat sauce for the hardest thing was getting the gelatin to set. It had to be below sixty degrees to set and we needed a generator big enough to hold the entire box of gelatin. If we had done it would have been to make it in the bottom. But that did not work because the box tipped over and the coffin was tipped out on top of the bottom half. Finally, we put two molds together and then carefully poured the gelatin in through holes in the top and poured the gelatin in through holes in the whole thing outside overnight to cure."

Finally captured, Sam Lowry is transported to the Ministry of Information where his valiant quest is irrevocably terminated in the Ministry. Gilliam had had very specific ideas for the Ministry. However, the discovery of a location site changed his mind completely. "We went to Croydon Power Station," Gilliam recalls. "I was going to use its exterior and a big furnace. It had six cooling towers and I asked if we could use one — I had always wanted to know about those things. It was amazing! I had originally had the Ministry to be rectangular and no curves at all. But when I saw the tower, I decided to put that aside. The tower was just too good."

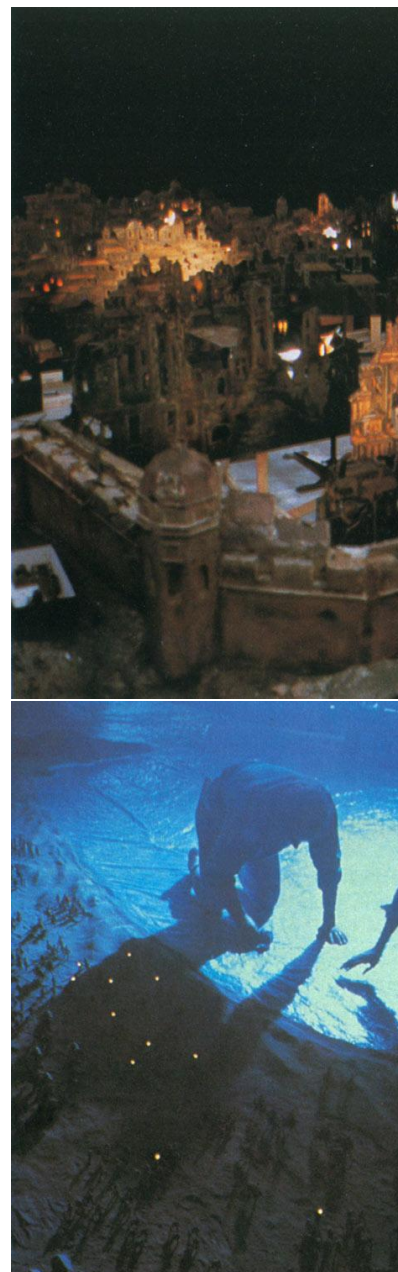
With nothing but his fantasies to sustain himself, Sam Lowry is rescued by Harry Tuttle and a band of commandos who enter through a hole in the ceiling and abseil down to the floor. "I used a lot of abseiling stuff with models," Gilliam says. The stunt supervisor, convinced us that it was great because it never would have been done with models. We got a huge crane to lift the top of the tower, which was about two hundred

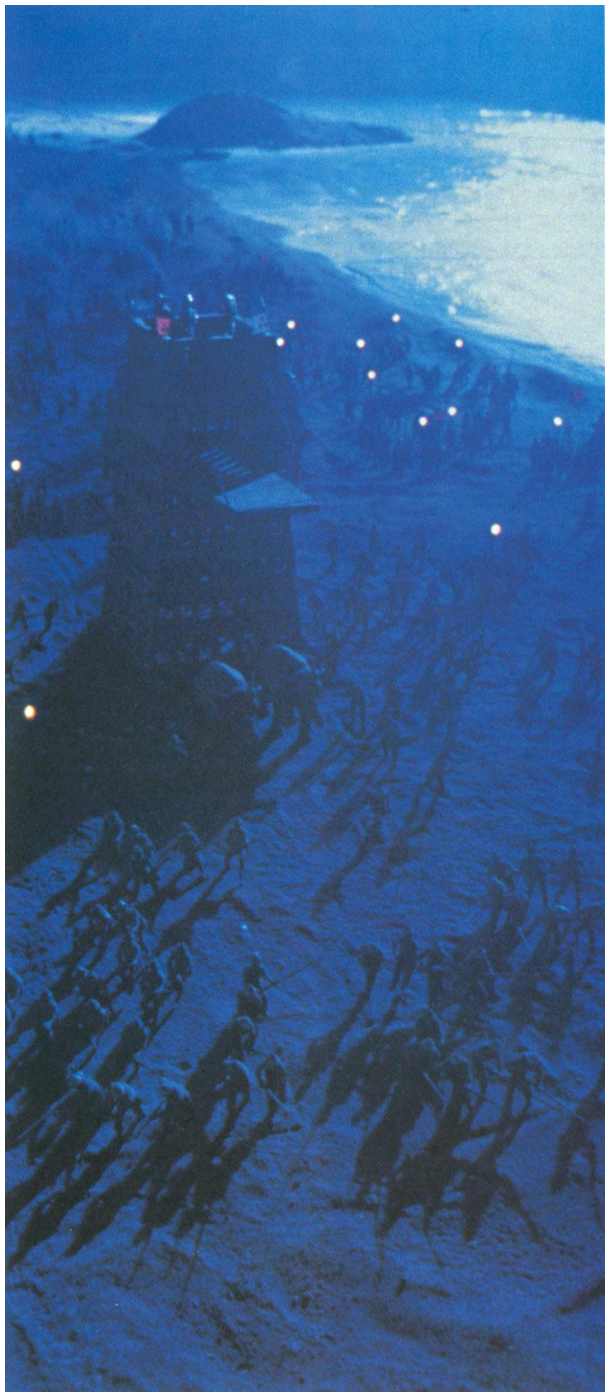
During a nighttime battle, the Baron inadvertently finds himself clinging to a mortar shell fired from the city battlements out over the Turkish invaders. A giant miniature battlefield — eighty feet long by thirty feet wide — was constructed at Pinewood for point-of-view and plate shots. At one end was a large representation of the city consisting of foreground model work and background cutouts. / Crew members examine the ocean surface which was fashioned from sheet plastic. / The set was dressed with miniature battle towers and war elephants — plus some three thousand enemy soldiers one-and-a-half inches tall. / Last-minute preparations included brushing the sand covering to erase footprints and create appropriate surface texture. / An aerial tracking rig — manned by model unit

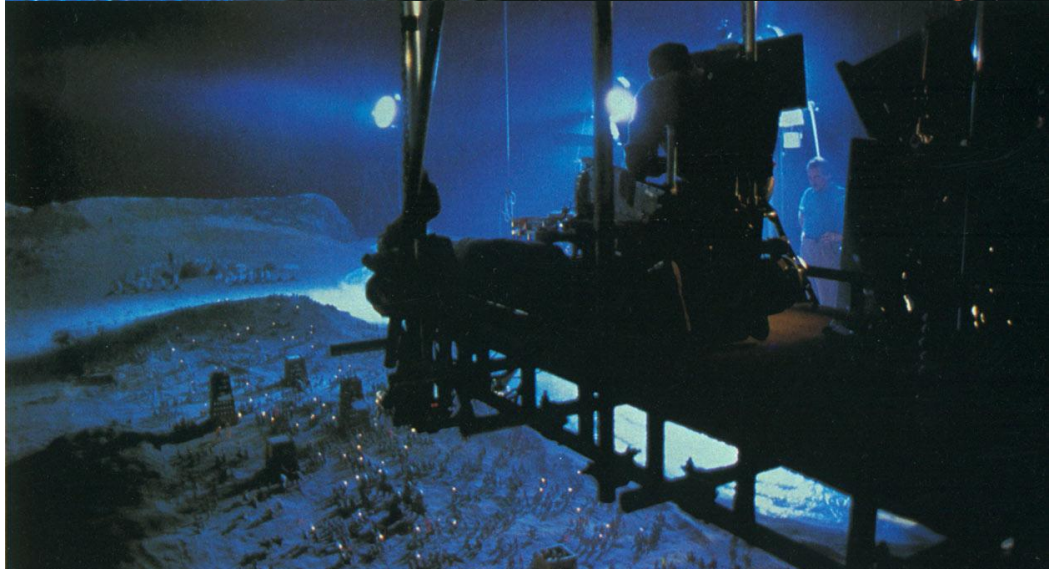
tall tales concerning his wartime exploits. One of his listeners, Rudolf Erich Raspe, subsequently published a collection of these whoppers in a book that at once secured the Baron's fame and also his reputation as the world's greatest liar. The Munchausen stories became instant hits — particularly among children — and are widely known throughout Central Europe to this day. In more recent years, *Munchausen* has made the transition from page to screen in over a dozen films, beginning as early as 1911 with the George Melies dramatization of *The Hallucinations of Baron Munchausen*. A lavish 1943 production of *Muenchhausen* was directed by Joseph von Baky in Germany under the financial auspices of Hitler's Third Reich.

Following *Brazil*, Gilliam and actor-writer Charles McKeown began collaborating on an all-new *Munchausen* adaptation. "At the very start of this project I was trying to think of how one could make a comedy during the famine in Ethiopia," Gilliam recalled, "what an actual Ethiopian living through that might find funny. That was to get myself in the proper mood. Right now we live in a world where even mere bread has become one of life's most precious resources. Yet I somehow think that the spirit of a people, rather than what's in their bellies, is the important thing. And this is what Charles and I tried to inject into *Munchausen*. We used the book only as a springboard. We invented the whole spine of the story, of the Baron having to seek out four magically gifted servants who could save his city from the invading Turks. Those portions of the book we did retain — the journey to the moon and the cannonball ride — are among the most well-known Munchausen fables, so we knew we would have to deal with them."

Though the project was originally to have been produced by Milchan for 20th Century Fox, an eventual falling out between the principals resulted in the film's changing hands to producer Thomas Schuhly and a multinational conglomerate that included Columbia Pictures. Preproduction was now ready to begin. Although Gilliam had always worked in England, he and Schuhly decided that *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* could best be realized at the Cinecitta Studios in Rome. Built by Benito Mussolini in 1936 — complete with sixteen soundstages and an outdoor water tank — Cinecitta lays claim to being the largest production facility in the world. As an inducement to the *Munchausen* company, the studio agreed to install a state-of-the-art Stewart bluescreen that was sixty feet long by thirty feet tall. Housed on its own soundstage, the \$8 million fluorescent marvel was deemed critical for *Munchausen*, as over one hundred and fifty bluescreen shots would be needed for the film. "The decision to shoot in Cinecitta was also economic," Gilliam stated. "I was assured by Schuhly that it would be thirty to forty percent cheaper to film in Italy. Given all the problems I ran into, however, this turned out to be an opium







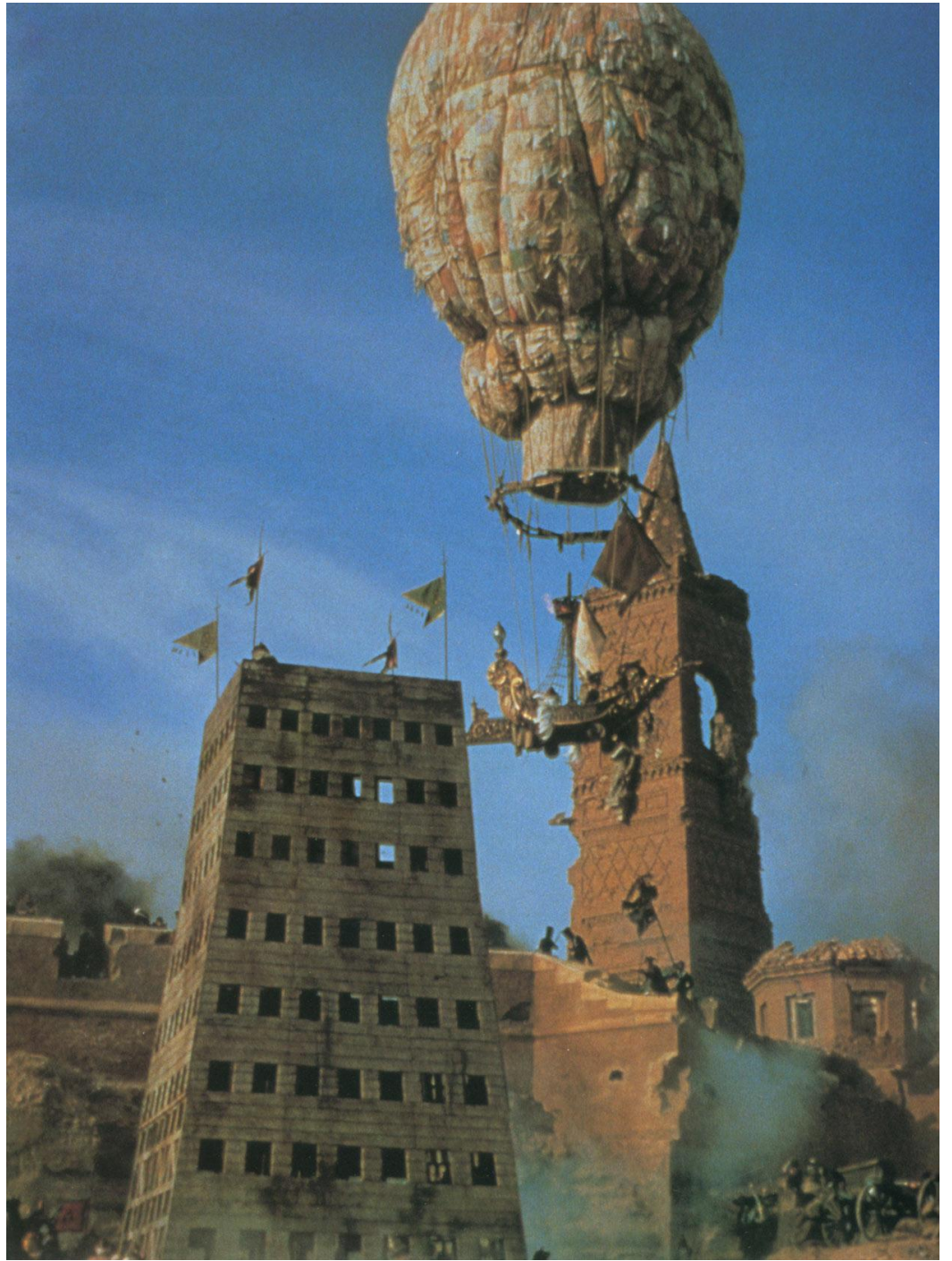


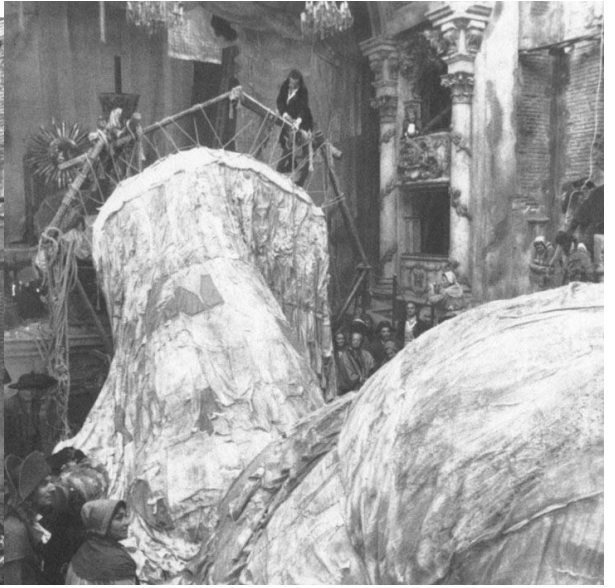
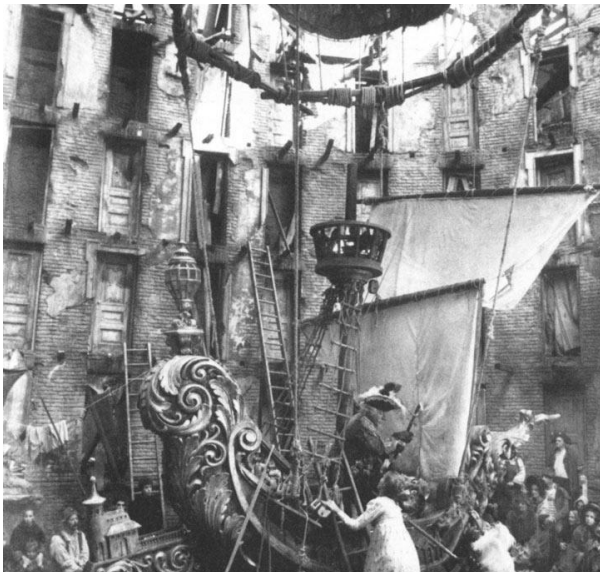
was that I could not resist the opportunity of the same Italian technicians who had worked for Federico Fellini. In fact, one day Fellini hired the *Munchausen* art department to give us his idea. It was one of the high points of an otherwise

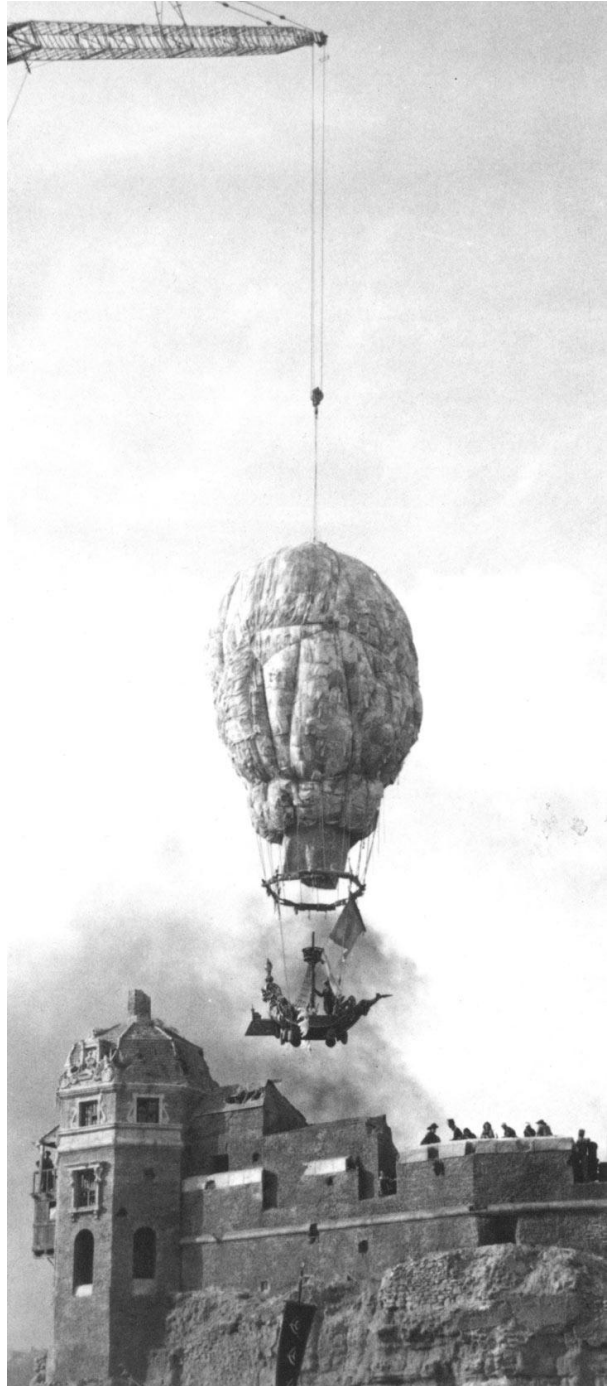
First on the list of internationally renowned production designer Dante Ferretti. "Dante wanted to do *Munchausen* in Rome. He had and had also designed all the Pasolini films. I had studied those films to get the sense of texture that Dante had. So it was wonderful to get to work on it after having been copying all those years ago. Aside from bringing most of my regulars down from Jim Acheson and Roger Pratt and a core we were firmly committed to Rome, but that the per diems would cost millions became totally impractical. So we ended up taking on an all-Italian special effects." For director of photography Giuseppe Rotunno, a frequent Fellini collaborator, such acclaimed directors as Pasolini and Bob Fosse. For his costume Gabriella Pescucci, an award-winning scale period pieces. Backed by this crew, the film moved forward into preproduction in early principal photography was underway.

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen solely to the Cinecittà soundstages. A battle scenes had been envisioned featuring an army laying siege to a walled city. In battle scenes were shot in the arid desert — specifically at Almería, a famous spot where portions of other fantasies such as *The Godfather* had also been shot. For the city itself moved to northeastern Spain and the ruins of a beautiful city unrestored since its devastation in the Spanish Civil War.

The first shot in the film reveals a view of the sea with half-sunken ships. Beyond is the Tuñón in the distance the walled city dotted with towers. It was but the first of fifteen matte shots. It was but the first of fifteen matte shots by Doug Ferris and Bob Cuff and photographed by John Grant at Peerless Camera. As with other projects, Peerless and effects supervisor were tasked with most of the *Munchausen* work. In fact, more than *Time Bandits* and *Brazil*, the action plate of the Turkish army surrounding the beach at Almería." Houston recalled



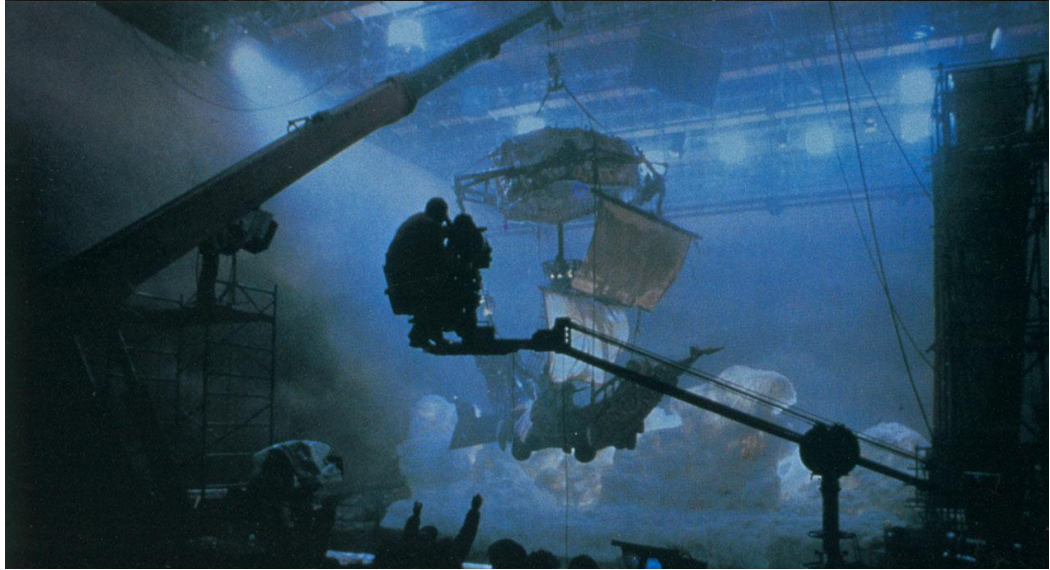


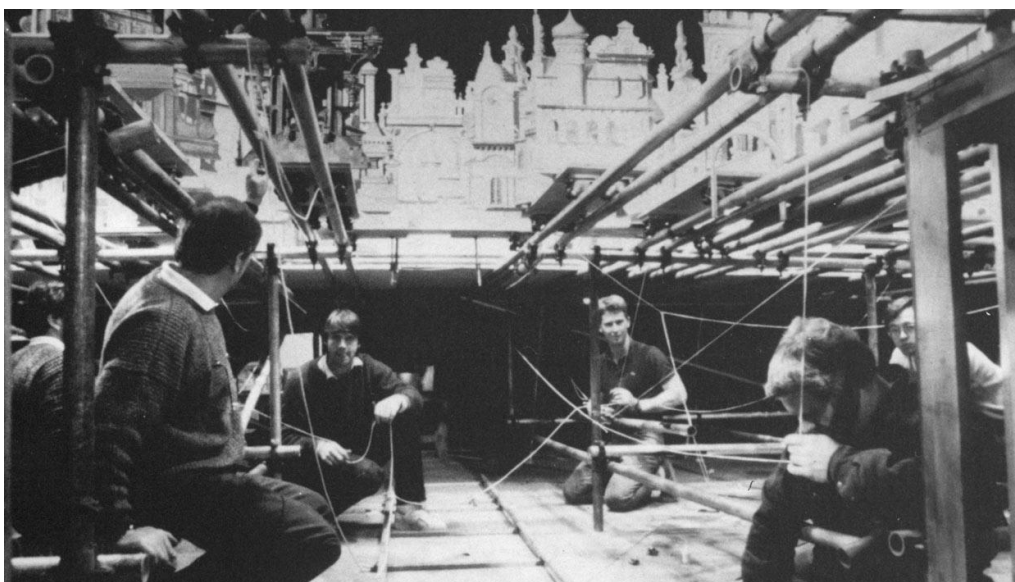
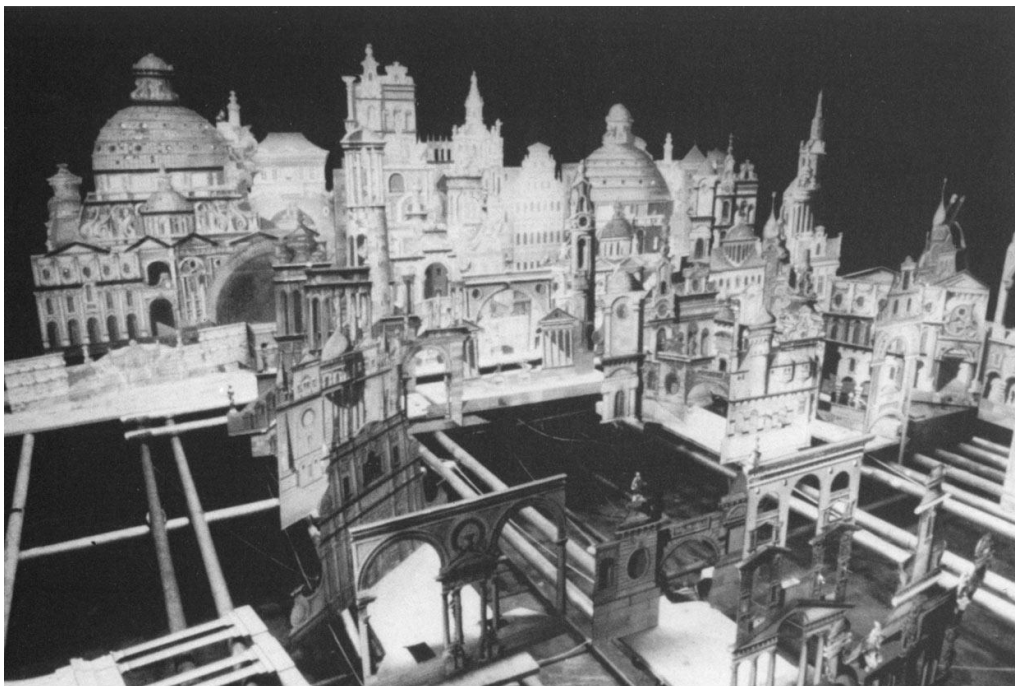






CINEFEX 2





we made the gondola, which was a steel and painted timber."

Construction of the balloon was hampered by nothing to do with materials and crafts; the problem came when we discovered that there was no place in Rome big enough to assemble things seventy feet high — not even hang the whole thing outside in the open. It was then we have to work outdoors, but the wind during the day that we could only work when the winds subsided. It was all very frustrating.

Building the balloon was only part of the problem; another was the gondola. "We tracked down the biggest find — a quite enormous bit of machine and seventy-five feet tall. We hung our steel crane; the gondola was suspended from the envelope was hung in and around it. The weight turned out to be an advantage of using it in the wind. Instead of only being able to shoot the balloon in wind conditions of less than five miles an hour, which would be normal for this type of aerial work, what we had built allowed us to have it shoot it under wind conditions up to twelve knots was the Belchite on a *slow* day! Without that we never have gotten our footage."

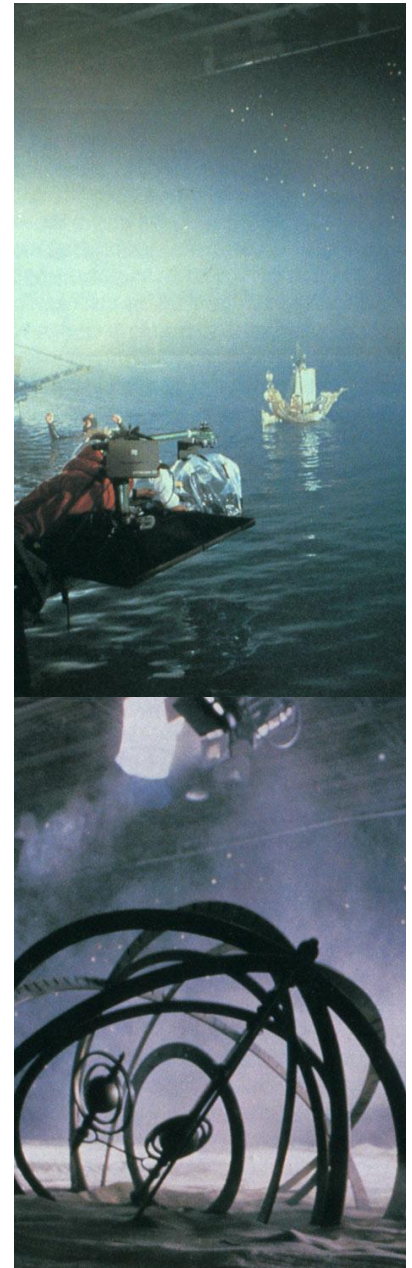
In designing the sequence, Gilliam had in mind a series of aerial tracking shots that would follow over the Belchite battlements. "We had overhead cabling to get the aerial camera called. "One was done at the beach in Almería when the Baron looks down from the Turkish army passing underneath him. We had to build twin reinforced tubular steel towers hundred feet tall, string up four hundred cables, hang operators in metal baskets to look the soldiers down below. But the hairiest part was the rigging itself. The city is a ruin, really. It was designed to be a ruin, and everything is crumbling. Terry Gilliam, but because of space restrictions, we had to put much of our overhead cabling to these structures — bell towers and such — and the towers made of tubular scaffolding to a point where our wire tracking rigs. These man-made towers were wired down — in very little available space — again hang metal baskets operated soon for the camera operator to work in. But the weight to structures that looked as if they were about to fall at the moment — even though we reinforced them."

For its fanciful passage to the moon, the gondola galleon was reproduced in quarter-scale and photographed in a giant water tank on the Pinewood 007 stage. / Among the artifacts dotting the lunar landscape is an enormous orrery hundreds of feet tall. / The inhabitants of the moon — giant beings who can separate their heads from their bodies at will — are ruled by a mad monarch (Robin Williams). For scenes of his disembodied head floating about, the actor was placed in a gyroscopically controlled chair that could be manipulated through specific bits of choreography by two off-camera operators. Filmed against a bluescreen or surrounded by a blue neon collar, Williams' head could be isolated and matted against starfields or other desired backgrounds. / Smitten by the tiny Baron, the Moon Queen (Valentina Cortese) defies her husband and sets the earthlings free. / Outraged, the King summons his three-headed griffin and sets out to recapture the escapees. Full views of the monarch and his flying mount

supplied it with quarter-scale Baron and Sally figures. Then we built a wooden trough about twenty feet wide by thirty feet long. At the bottom and sides of this trough we put thick wire mesh lined with sheet plastic. Initially we filled the trough with sand, taking care to sift and sculpt the top layer into rough dunes and such. Then we carefully added water — just enough so that it barely covered the top of the sand. Next the quarter-scale gondola was put into the trough with its bottom actually resting flat against the submerged sand. To get the shot, we pulled the boat along on a track while we lowered one wall of the trough. The water naturally filtered down through the sand and gushed out of the mesh, gently lowering the boat onto the sand. As for the reflected stars, those were a number of pea-bulbs mounted in a black backing that we hung at an oblique angle to the water. The camera shot down into the water and caught the reflection of these bulbs winking on and off. The whole shot was quite simply done, but many people have commented on how lovely it is. In *Munchausen*, Terry was going for the beautiful whenever he could — unlike the direction he had sought in some of his other films."

Sailing across the lunar sands, the intrepid adventurers encounter a host of dazzling sights including a gigantic orrery — a mechanical representation of the solar system — lying in the sand surrounded by a sparkling star background. The structure itself — a five-foot miniature machined from steel — was combined with a split-screen starfield background. Next the gondola is seen traversing another vista punctuated with architectural ruins and a great stone head buried in the sand — an image suggestive of Shelley's 'Ozymandias' which Gilliam once recited on an old Monty Python show. "None of that was in there to begin with," Gilliam remarked. "I was on the set getting ready for the shot, and I thought, 'God, this landscape looks awfully boring.' So I had the art department search around and see what they could find in the way of plaster buildings and architectural pieces and whatnot. One of the things they found back in the plaster shop was a mask that looked like it might have been Alexander the Great or somebody like that. So I stuck it in the foreground and took a pocket knife and started carving great cracks into it and aging it down. It looked wonderful." Shot at Pinewood on a tabletop setting seventy feet wide by thirty feet deep, the scene required yet another miniature gondola — a polystyrene model only three inches long — that was pulled along by wires attached to a small motor and a rotating drum.

"Sally and the Baron then drift into a rather bizarre two-dimensional city that keeps shifting back and forth around them," said Conway. "All that was done in an incredible panic. Originally there was an elaborate sequence planned that was going to need a full-blown miniature city made from plaster. But at this point the production had run out of money, so Terry









tabletop moon set was then equipped with hidden tracks onto which the various art pieces were affixed. With cameras rolling, concealed crew members moved the artwork back and forth on wires, as the flat city actually boxing the gondola. These shots were a number of bluescreen shots of the Baron and Sally inside the gondola.

Before long, they are captured by the (Williams) — a mad monarch capable of detaching his head from the spiritual by detaching his head from the starfield," explained Conway. "But we had to do it for a week, and during that period we had to do action and effects scenes. We began by treating him like a gyroscopically controlled dentist could strap him. With two guys physically able to swing the whole chair around a still keep the camera focused on Robin's head with only a week allotted to us we were out of time to pull off elaborate bluescreen effects. We optically separate Robin's head from his tube bent into a curve and built an inter bluescreen collar that went around his neck back of our gyroscopic chair. In this manner we shoot Robin's head wobbling around but the element at the same time. Our problem was the collar sloped forward and we could not get angles — otherwise it would reflect off back into the camera. We got around this with a counterweighted lighting system that followed the movements of the space occupied by Robin's head. But when Robin's head moved on the chair, the lighting would move in.

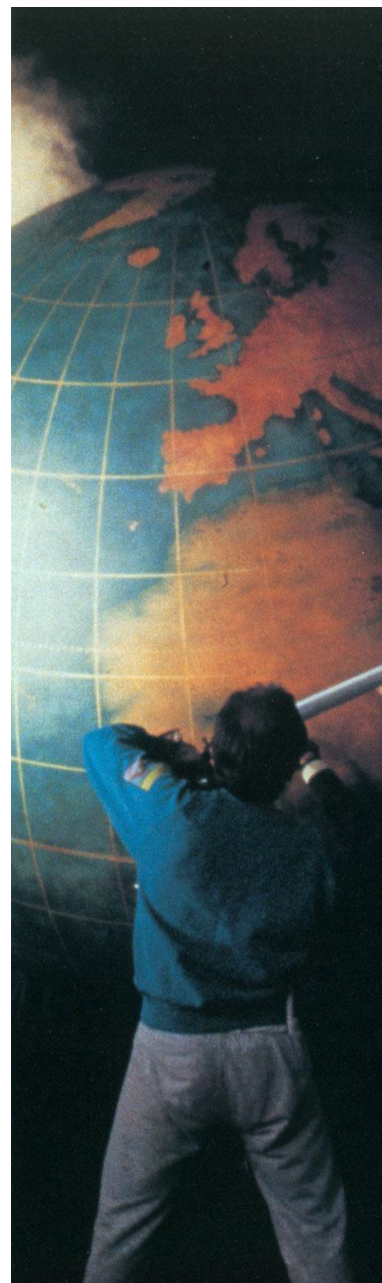
To align the background starfields with the optical effects coordinator Martin Body used a sheet of black Astrolux paper. Then he had to shoot the starfields, creating moves of the rostrum camera that were semi-controlled by the movements of Williams in the chair. A lot of rotoscoping was needed for scenes of the King against the stars," said Houston, "mainly because we were not able to pull decent mattes off the neon ceiling having to do most of it by hand. The King's head was an especially difficult one. The King zooms away to infinity. We accomplished this from a closeup of Williams sneezing to a wide shot executed by Peter Tyler and Kenneth. A model head of Robin was attached to a control rig. Then we programmed the camera to follow the head's movements.

Effects crew members prepare a giant globe for a shot in which the Baron and his comrades plummet back to earth. / In the subterranean domain of Vulcan, the genteel Baron finds himself overwhelmed by the delicate beauty of Venus — goddess of love and wife of the brutish fire god. Literally swept off their feet, the Baron and Venus dance blissfully through the air in a ballroom setting adorned with fountains and waterfalls. Wide shots were accomplished with half-scale marionettes mounted on wires and puppeteered electronically via computer. Christine Overs — who with Valerie Charlton constructed the figures — examines the wire mounts in preparation for a take. / The puppet dancers waltz gracefully through the air in a miniature ballroom constructed by Dante Ferretti and rigged by Richard Conway. / When closeups were needed, John Neville and Uma Thurman were photographed on an elevated platform that was framed out of the shot. By forcing the perspective with strategically placed chandeliers, Gilliam was

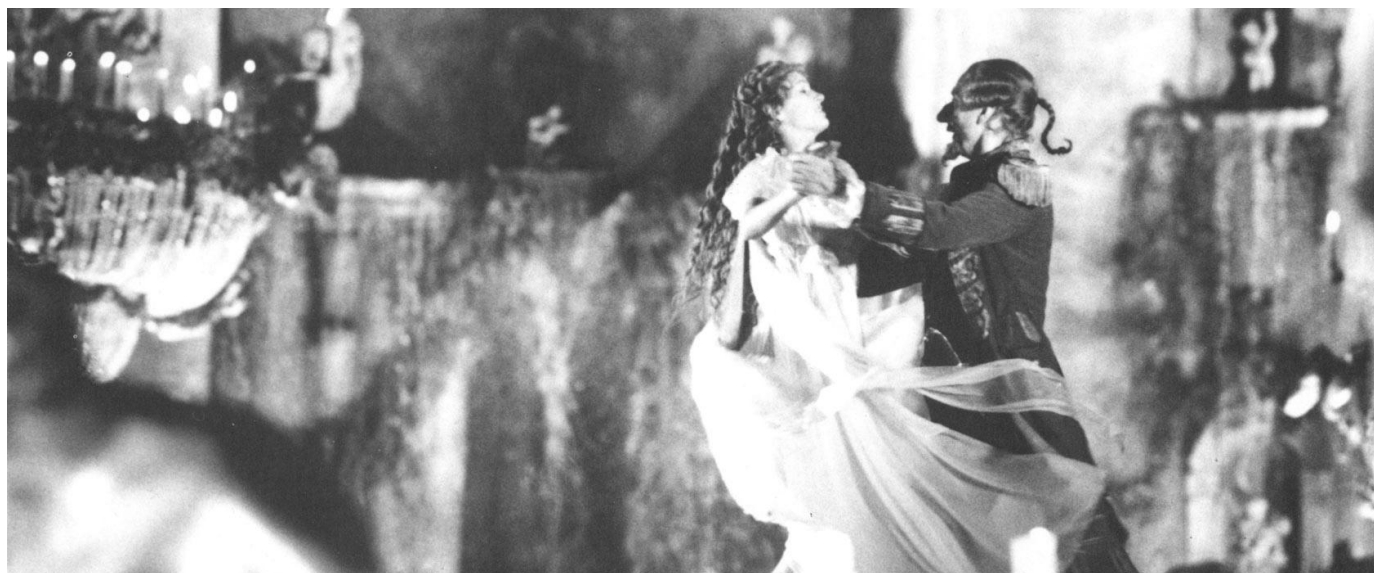
ton. "When Terry had finished the model shoot, he and I were looking at what opticals needed to be done and I noticed that these particular running shots only had black backgrounds. I asked Terry if he wanted stars there. He said no, and the accountants heaved a sigh of relief. But I just had a feeling things might change later on. So we quickly made up another starfield and shot that — both as a stationary element and with some movements that matched the model shots. Then we threw in some rough rotoscoping around the running figures. Later on, when the picture was cut together, Terry realized that stars would add value to some of the shots — and we were ready with that footage."

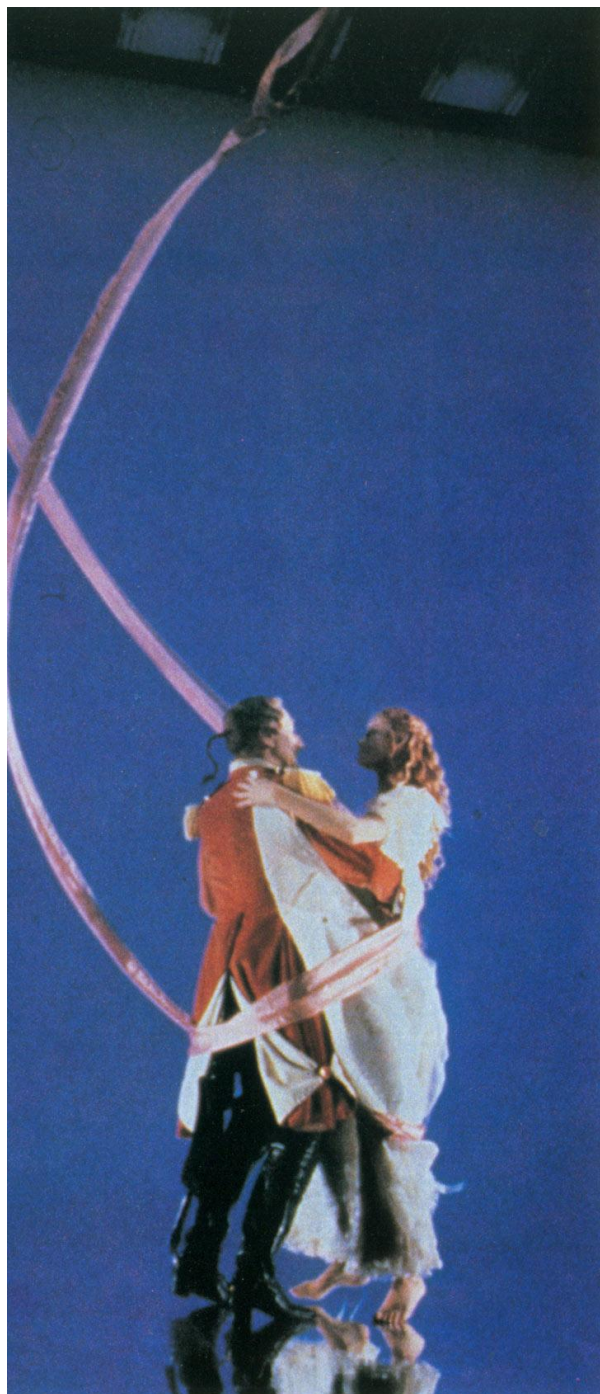
Discovering that his captives have been freed — and suspecting the minute Baron of dallying with his wife — the enraged King mounts his three-headed griffin and sets out to recapture the earthlings. "We conjured up two griffins for the sequence," Conway said, "one full-scale and one half-scale. Both were based loosely on an illustration Terry Gilliam had once seen. We also incorporated some vulture features, such as the big bags of flesh around the necks. Both versions were animatronically operated. The full-scale griffin — the one Robin Williams rides — was supported by a steel armature so that Robin could simply climb into the saddle and ride it. Basically it was just the three heads and a suggestion of the wings — so it was only for tight shots. For wider shots we used the half-scale griffin, which was complete and capable of doing just about anything. Altogether it was three feet high and had a wingspan of fourteen feet. The whole model was really quite robust — internally and externally — and was supported on three metal pylons. The griffin was modeled and dressed by Val Charlton — using our polyurethane feathers again — and the mechanics were worked out by Bob Hollow. Basically it ran off a one-to-one hydraulic system, but we also used cable controls, puppet wire and radio controls. On its back there was a half-scale marionette of Robin Williams — again modeled by Val Charlton. We operated that figure on a fifty-fifty basis — the top half was puppeteered from above and the bottom half was on a hydraulic system."

The King spies the fleeing humans and hurls a huge asparagus spear into the lunar dust to block their progress. An aerial POV of this spear sticking in the sand was another matte painting augmented by a computer-controlled push-in. Seized with inspiration, the Baron instructs Sally to run off in one direction while he flees in the other. Frenzied with blood lust, the griffin's outermost heads diverge — each pursuing its own intended victim. But the strain is too much and the winged beast literally rips itself into three separate pieces. "The half-scale griffin was the one that split apart," explained Gilliam. "We suspended it about nine feet off the ground in front of a bluescreen. From below, it was supported by three metal rods painted blue so they would disappear in front of the screen. Two of the rods were











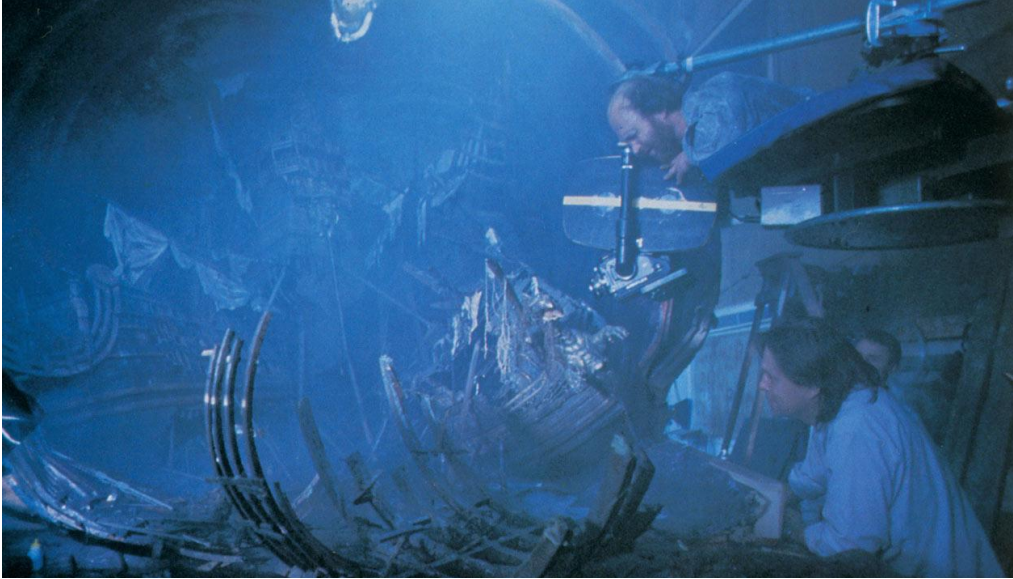




"The aerial ballroom sequence was on for me," Gilliam commented. "It's such a romantic moment. The bulk of that material was on an enormous miniature set. In fact, the entire setup is a model shot. But there are some problems also. Whenever you can clearly see John and Margot dancing together in the same shot, you never see their feet. That's because they were dancing on a platform in front of the background. We had no full-scale set. Instead, we shot with a narrow lens so the background was so close that it came into the eye into believing that the actors were in an enormous space. What we did was hang a chandelier as far away from the camera as possible. A larger chandelier was hung directly in front of the actors' faces. This way they could see a certain depth and perspective.

Although most of the aerial ballroom sequence was a miniature, it was not the intended approach of using real people suspended on wires," Gilliam continued. "It was hopeless — they couldn't do a take long enough to accomplish the wide shots of the Baroque ballroom. Most of the *Munchausen* model work was filmed at Cinecittà. A standing set was built there and Ferretti brought the half-scale ballroom, which was paid to its aquatic wonders. "The setting was a Roman landmark called the Villa D'Este, which is a grouping of buildings and gardens with falls and fountains. In fact, Terry Jones originally planned the sequence there, but could not get permission to recreate the whole effect back in the States. So he used some spare water jets from the Villa itself. We made a series of holes in them to aerate the water — a problem since we were shooting in half-scale. The water would have run into that old problem of being a difficult substance to convincingly miniaturized. We created eight thirty-foot-high falls and four hundred fountains. They all ran off a series of hidden pumps that were channeled through ordinary fire hoses from the main pools that were twenty feet across. The entire system was a closed system — the water was collected in the fountains and then back to the pool.

With the eighty-foot semicircular min-



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Although most of the aerial ballroom sequence was on a miniature, it was not the intended approach. Using real people suspended on wires, it was hopeless — they couldn't do a take to accomplish the wide shots of the Barad-dûr.

